

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT PARIS 15798 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BUCHAREST
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QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 15798

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR, US, FR

SUBJECT: VIKTOR LOUIS ARTICLE ON SINO-SOVIET TENSION

REF: (A) MOSCOW 10029; (B) HONG KONG 7219

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: EXCLUSIVE ARTICLE BY SOVIET JOURNALIST
VIKTOR LOUIS IN FRANCE SOIR EVENING OF JUNE 26 STRESSES
TENSION ON SINO-SOVIET BORDER. IN RAISING POSSIBILITY
THAT SOVIET HELICOPTER CREW MAY BE TRIED BY CHINESE ALONG
LINES OF GARY POWERS TRIAL IN MOSCOW IN 1960, LOUIS
CLAIMS MOSCOW PAPERS SEEM TO BE PREPARING THEIR READERS
FOR THE WORST BY RECALLING MARCH 1969 BORDER SKIRMISHES.
END SUMMARY.

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2. LOUIS LEADS OFF BY NOTING THAT SINO-SOVIET BORDER

REGION IS FAR FROM CALM. HOWEVER, HE CITES A LITERATURNAYA GAZETA CORRESPONDENT'S PRAISE OF SOVIET FRONTIER GUARDS FOR THEIR RESISTANCE TO CHINESE PROVOCATIONS AND SUCCESS IN AVOIDING ACTUAL CONFLICTS. THE CORRESPONDENT IS QUOTED AS CONCLUDING THAT SOVIET POLICY IS "TO STAY CALM IN THE FACE OF FRONTIER VIOLATIONS BY THE CHINESE."

3. LOUIS GOES ON TO SAY THAT INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED NEVERTHELESS AND HE THEN PROCEEDS TO DISCUSS THAT OF THE SOVIET HELICOPTER. HE RIDICULES THE CHINESE CONTENTION THAT ITS MISSION WAS ONE OF ESPIONAGE BY ALLUDING TO SOVIET SATELLITE CAPABILITIES. "CAN ONE CONCLUDE THAT SOVIET SATELLITES ARE FLYING OVER CHINA?" HE ASKS, TO WHICH HE ANSWERS, "MAYBE." TURNING HIS ATTENTION TO THE FATE OF THE SOVIET CREW, LOUIS WRITES THAT "ACCORDING TO MOSCOW RUMORS, THEY MAY HAVE BEEN DISPLAYED PUBLICLY IN A MOBILE CAGE." COMMENT. THIS STATEMENT IS GUARDED AND NOT STATED AS FACT, CONTRARY TO VERSION NOTED REFTEL B AND IN LE FIGARO COMMENTARY WHICH HAS LOUIS DECLARING THAT THE CREW "HAS BEEN EXHIBITED ALL ACROSS CHINA IN IRON CAGES." END COMMENT.

4. LOUIS CLAIMS THAT A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE PREDICTING A TRIAL ON THE PATTERN OF THAT HELD FOR GARY POWERS IN MOSCOW IN 1960. IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT HE SAYS, "AS IF WANTING TO PREPARE THEIR READERS FOR THE WORST, MOSCOW NEWSPAPERS, IN TREATING THE SUBJECT, RARELY FAIL

TO RECALL THE SINO SOVIET BORDER INCIDENTS OF MARCH 1969." HE NOTES POINTEDLY THAT THE TOMBS OF FALLEN SOVIET SOLDIERS ARE CARED FOR WITH AS MUCH ATTENTION AS THOSE OF THE SOVIET VICTIMS OF SINO-SOVIET FRONTIER INCIDENTS IN 1929.

5. THE BALANCE OF THE ARTICLE IS DEVOTED TO THE SOVIET PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CHINESE. HE CONTRASTS VOA USE OF TERM "CHINESE PEOPLES REPUBLIC" WITH SOVIET MEDIA WHICH REFER ONLY TO "CHINA" OR "PEKING," THE LATTER OF WHICH IS REGARDED AS A SYNONYM FOR "UNFRIENDLY" BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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AVERAGE RUSSIAN. HE NOTES THE PROBLEMS FOR SOVIETS DESIRING TO VISIT CHINA AND QUOTES OLEG BORISOV IN IZVESTIYA AS CLAIMING THERE WERE 900 ANTI-SOVIET ARTICLES LAST YEAR IN THE CHINESE PRESS -- TWICE AS MANY AS IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR. ON THE OTHER HAND, LOUIS ASSERTS THAT SOVIET RADIO STATIONS BROADCAST PROGRAMS ON CHINA 24 HOURS A DAY "WHICH ARE NOT FRIENDLY IN THE LEAST." CITING WESTERN OBSERVERS, LOUIS SAYS THIS CAMPAIGN IS

PAYING OFF, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE NON-ETHNIC CHINESE POPULATION IN SINKIANG. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE CHINESE REPLY BY CLAIMING THAT RUSSIA OCCUPIES 500,000 SQUARE KILOMETERS OF SINKIANG AND COVETS THE REST. HE ENDS THE ARTICLE BY DESCRIBING THE MOSCOW BORDER-GUARD MUSEUM WHERE THE GUIDE SPEAKS OF MAOIST PROVOCATIONS AGAINST SOVIET SOVEREIGNTY IN 1969 AND POINTS TO RIFLES OF SOVIET MANUFACTURE TAKEN FROM FALLEN CHINESE SOLDIERS, GIVEN TO THEM GRATIS BY THE SOVIETS DURING A HAPPIER TIME.

6. COMMENT. IN A DESPATCH FROM MOSCOW JUNE 26, LE FIGARO CORRESPONDENT CLAIMS VIKTOR LOUIS "ORCHESTRATED" THE DEPARTURE OF ILICHEV FOR PEKING, WHICH SUGGESTS THERE MAY BE OTHER ARTICLES BY HIM ON THIS SUBJECT. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY MOSCOW'S ASSESSMENT THAT THIS ARTICLE IS PART OF PROPAGANDA EFFORT TO BUTTRESS ILICHEV'S POSITION AS HE RESUMES THE BORDER TALKS. CHOICE OF FRANCE SOIR, ONE OF FRANCE'S MOST WIDELY READ NEWSPAPERS, FOR ITS PUBLICATION, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS SPECIFIC FRENCH ANGLE MAY ALSO BE INVOLVED. WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOVIET EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONCERNED OVER POSSIBILITY OF SOME SWING IN POLICY OF NEW GISCARD GOVERNMENT TOWARD PEKING. ARTICLE MAY THUS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO HELP BUILD UP FAVORABLE SOVIET IMAGE AT EXPENSE OF CHINESE. THAT IMAGE COMES THROUGH IN THE ARTICLE AS ONE OF PATIENCE COMBINED WITH FIRM RESOLVE TO RESPOND TO THE CHINESE IN KIND.
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